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EXCISE E

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ACTION SS 70

INFO NSCE 00,CIAE 00,SSO 00,DODE 00,USIE 00,NSAE 00,CCO 00,/070 W

P R 271045Z AUG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5449
INFO CINCPAC FOR POLAD
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2285
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3943

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 8/27/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

Saigon 4144 8/27/81

S E C R E T SAIGON 4144

Pol 14 Viet S

LIMDIS

REF: A. SAIGON 2882; B. SAIGON 4117

1. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE TRAN VAN HUONG TOLD EMBOFF MORNING AUGUST 27 THAT HE WILL NOT RPT NOT WITHDRAW FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE. HUONG SAID THAT MANY PEOPLE HAVE ADVISED HIM TO DO SO IN ORDER TO "PRESERVE MY PRESTIGE," BUT TO PULL OUT NOW WOULD BE A BETRAYAL OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN HIM. HE OBSERVED THAT WHEREVER HE GOES HE IS GREETED BY OVATIONS

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AND THAT THE PEOPLE DO NOT CARE WHAT HE HAS TO SAY BUT ONLY WANT TO SEE HIS FACE. PEOPLE HAVE STOPPED HIM ON THE STREET TO PRESS MONEY ON HIM TO HELP IN HIS CAMPAIGN. SOME DONORS GIVE HIM A HUNDRED THOUSAND PIASTERS, WHILE THE POOR HAVE GIVEN HIM THEIR SMALL SAVINGS, SOMETIMES AS LITTLE AS 300 PIASTERS. HE CANNOT LET THESE PEOPLE DOWN. AT ONE POINT HE HAD DECIDED TO PULL OUT, BUT HE IS NOW DETERMINED TO STAY IN THE RACE IN ORDER TO KEEP FAITH WITH THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE HIM.

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2. WHEN EMBOFF MENTIONED RUMOR THAT HUONG MIGHT THROW HIS SUPPORT TO SUU, HUONG OBSERVED THAT HE HAS KNOWN SUU FOR A LONG TIME AND ADMIRES HIM VERY MUCH. HE WOULD NEVER SAY OR DO ANYTHING AGAINST SUU. NEVERTHELESS HE COULD NOT SUPPORT SUU FOR PRESIDENT BECAUSE SUU COULD NOT GIVE VIET-NAM THE KIND OF LEADERSHIP THAT IS NEEDED. SUU IS WEAK AND AGREES ALWAYS WITH THE LAST MAN HE HAS SEEN. (HUONG RECOUNTED THE NOW POPULAR STORY OF THE "THREE YESSES." ACCORDING TO THIS STORY, SUU TALKED WITH THREE MEN ABOUT THE SAME PROBLEM, WAS CONVINCED IN TURN THAT EACH OF THEIR THREE DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS WAS CORRECT, AND SAID YES TO ALL THREE. SUU IS THEREFORE SOMETIMES

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REFERRED TO AS BA PHAI -"THREE YESSES".) THERE IS ALSO THE PROBLEM OF THE BAD ELEMENTS AROUND SUU.

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3. EMBOFF THEN ASKED IF THERE IS ANY PROSPECT THAT SUU OR ANY OTHER CANDIDATES WILL WITHDRAW IN FAVOR OF HUONG. HUONG SAID THAT SUU WILL NEVER WITHDRAW. SUU HAS MADE A DEAL WITH PRIMIN KY, AND KY'S MACHINE IS NOW SUPPORTING HIM. IN RETURN SUU WILL NAME KY PRIME MINISTER IF HE IS ELECTED. (AS REPORTED REFERENCE B, DR. DAN HAS TOLD US THAT THE SUU-DAN SLATE HAS AT LEAST CONSIDERED KY AS A POSSIBLE PRIME MINISTER, BUT THEY ARE NOW LEANING TOWARD GENERAL THANG.)

4. ALTHOUGH SUU WILL NOT PULL OUT IN HIS FAVOR, HUONG COMMENTED THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TRUONG DINH DZU AND VU HONG KHNAH MAY DO SO. THE PROBLEM IS MONEY. IF HUONG'S SLATE CAN PICK UP THE COST OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR DZU AND KHANH, THEY WOULD PROBABLY AGREE TO WITHDRAW AND SUPPORT HUONG. UNFORTUNATELY HUONG IS A POOR MAN AND MUST DEPEND ENTIRELY ON CONTRIBUTIONS FOR HIS CAMPAIGN.

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5. HUONG SAID THAT HE IS SURE HE WOULD WIN IF THE ELECTION WAS

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HONEST. HOWEVER GOVERNMENT PRESSURES ON HIS CAMPAIGN WORKERS CONTINUE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT AT MY THO HE HAD CHALLENGED PRIMIN KY TO PRIMISE PUBLICLY THAT THERE WOULD BE NO REPRISALS TAKEN AGAINST ANY MILITARY MAN WHO CAME FORWARD WITH EVIDENCE THAT HE HAD RECEIVED TWO VOTING CARDS. HUONG THEN FISHED A HALF-DOZEN VOTING CARDS OUT OF HIS PICKET AND SHOWED EMBOFF TWO BEARING THE SAME NAME. (ALTHOUGH HUONG SAID THEY WERE THE VOTING CARS OF A MILITARY MAN, THERE WAS NOTHING ON THE CARD TO INDICATE THAT THE MAN WAS IN FACT MILITARY.) HUONG SIAD HE HAS ANOTHER SET OF THREE CARDS ISSUED TO ONE MAN, BUT HE DID NOT SHOW THEM TO EMBOFF.

6. WHEN EMBOFF NOTED THAT IN HIS OPINION HUOMP HAS A GOOD CHACE OF WINNING THE ELECTION, HUONG AGREED THAT DESPITE THE VARIOUS PRO-BLEMS HE HAD REFERRED TO HE STILL HAS HOPES OF WINNING. HOWEVER, TO TELL THE TRUTH, HE WOULD BE JUST AS HAPPY TO LOSE BECAUSE HE THINKS THAT HIS TROUBLES WOULD ONLY BEGIN IF HE WERE ELECTED.

7. SPEAKING OF KY, HUONG REFERRED TO KY'S REMARK ABOUT BUILDING

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A CAGE FOR DZU AND AKED IF THAT IS THE COMMENT OF A RESPONSIBLE MAN. HUONG SAID THAT HE DOES NOT CRITICIZE THIEU, WHO IS "RELATIVELY HONEST," ONLY KY.

8. ASKED ABOUT SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AT THE PUBLIC MEETINGS, HUONG SAID THEY WERE ADEQUATE, BUT ADDED THE THOUGHT THAT HE IS "MUCH EXPOSED."

[redacted] THE LOCAL ELECTIONS WERE IN FACT UNDERTAKEN MOSTLY TO PLEASE AND CONFUSE THE AMERICANS.

9. COMMENT: (A) WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK THAT BOTH HUONG AND

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SUU WILL IN FACT STAY IN THE RACE UNTIL THE END. IT IS PERHAPS SOMEWHAT LESS CERTAIN THAT HA THUC KY WILL DO SO, BUT WE NOW THINK THE ODDS FAVOR HIS ALSO GOING THE DISTANCE. THE POSSIBILITY OF WITHDRAWALS BY SOME OF THE MINOR CANDIDATES REMAINS, HOWEVER. SUCH WITHDRAWALS PROBABLY WOULD NOT CHANGE THE OUTCOME

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OF THE ELECTION, BUT WE DO NOT ALTOGETHER EXCLUDE THAT POSSIBILITY.

(B) THIS IS THE SECOND TIME THAT HUONG HAS ALLEGED THAT KY AND SUU HAVE MADE A SECRET DEAL (SAIGON 2970). WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE AND ARE INCLINED TO DISCOUNT HUONG'S CLAIMS.

(C) ALTHOUGH HUONG MAY HAVE SOME EVIDENCE THAT A FEW MILITARY MEN HAVE BEEN ISSUED TWO VOTING CARDS, WE DOUBT THAT THIS HAS HAPPENED IN ENOUGH INSTANCES TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE ELECTION (SAIGON 3725). IN THOSE CASES WHERE TWO CARDS HAVE BEEN ISSUED WE BELIEVE IT PROBABLY IS DUE TO ERROR RATHER THAN TO A DELIBERATE PLAN TO STUFF THE BALLOT BOXES.

(D) WE DO NOT AGREE THAT ANY LARGE NUMBER OF ELECTED HAMLET AND VILLAGE OFFICIALS ARE WORKING WITH THE VIET CONG. THERE PROBABLY ARE SOME CASES WHERE SUCH OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN ELCTED WITH THE SECRET AGREEMENT OF THE VIET CONG. THE CONTINUING COMMUNIST ATTACKS ON SUCH ELECTED OFFICILAS SUGGESTS, HOWEVER, THAT THE MAJORITY IN FACT ARE REGARDED BY THE COMMUNISTS AS IMPORTANT OBSTACLES TO THE COMMUNIST DRIVE TO SEIZE AND HOLD CONTROL OF THE RURAL POPULATION. BUNKER